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WINTER FIELD REPORT, December 2019-February 2020

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WINTER FIELD REPORT, December 2019-February 2020

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INTRODUCTION

As with any of these Seasonal Reports, there was plenty to entertain us and to contemplate this winter. The most obvious feature of this winter's reports was the taxonomically widespread incidence of midwinter occurrences of species normally absent at that time. Snow, Ross's, and Greater White-fronted Geese occurred in good numbers, and Jan to early Feb reports of dabbling and diving ducks often far from expected winter occurrence locations were notable. Among passerines, notable midwinter reports were of Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, and Northern Mockingbird, Nebraska's first record for Feb of American Pipit, and 6th winter record of Lesser Goldfinch. Both Eastern and Spotted Towhees were more in evidence, as were the icterids Western Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, and Brown-headed Cowbird.

Continuing trends of increasing numbers were White-winged Dove, which may be establishing a resident population into winter, and Lesser Black-backed Gull, primarily a migrant, with a vanguard of eight at Lake McConaughy by late Feb. Black-capped Chickadee and Black-billed Magpie still have population challenges, although the latter shows some encouraging signs. On the other hand, Gray Partridge was unreported.

Interesting happenings included a count of as many as 12 Northern Saw-whet Owls in a 2.5-mile stretch of cedar canyon roads in Lincoln County, and four westerly but establishing Barred Owls on the Harlan County Reservoir CBC. Also of interest was the high proportion of "Hepburn's" Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches in Sioux County, and it was hard to keep track of the Peregrine Falcon musical chairs in North Omaha.

Perhaps the most significant rarity was Nebraska's 4th Yellow-billed Loon, challenged closely by a rather incredible Lewis's Woodpecker that took up residence in Sarpy County, among all the places it could have chosen closer to home. Only the 3rd Laughing Gull for winter was a rare find. Also unexpected were four each of Northern Goshawks and Barrow's Goldeneyes, and the reports of three Pine Grosbeaks in Harlan County and a Varied Thrush in Lancaster County.

ABBREVIATIONS

BOL: Branched Oak Lake SRA, *Lancaster*
CBC: Christmas Bird Count
FF: Fontenelle Forest, *Sarpy*
GPD: Gavins Point Dam, *Cedar*

HCR: Harlan County Reservoir, *Harlan*

LM: Lake McConaughy, *Keith*

LO: Lake Ogallala, *Keith*

LSWNP: Lincoln Saline Wetlands Nature Park, *Lancaster*

m.ob.: multiple observers

MWCW: Marsh Wren Community Wetlands, *Lancaster*

NM: National Monument

NWR: National Wildlife Refuge

PL: Pawnee Lake SRA, *Lancaster*

PP: Pioneers Park Nature Center, Lincoln, *Lancaster*

PSP: Ponca SP, *Dixon*

RWB: Rainwater Basin, including several south-central and southeastern playa basins

SHP: State Historical Park

SL: Sewage Lagoons

SP: State Park

SRA: State Recreation Area

WHNC: Wildcat Hills Nature Center, *Scotts Bluff*

WMA: (State) Wildlife Management Area

OBSERVERS

Jessie Barry (JBa)

Joseph Beaderman (JBe)

Wendy Becker (WBe)

Eric Bents (EBe)

Scott Bradley (SBr)

Don Brockmeier (DBr)

Ed Brogie (EBr)

Lee Brogie (LBr)

Scott Buss (SB)

Andy Caven (ACa)

Colleen Childers (CCh)

Jen Corman (JCo)

Charlotte Croshaw (CCr)

Alex Cruz (ACr)

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Dianna Eddy (DED)

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Larry Einemann (LE)

Dave Ely (DE)

Corey Entriken (CEn)

William Flack (WF)

Rita Flohr (RF)

Tom Gannon (TG)

Jonas Grundman (JGr)

Kimberly Hill Grundman (KHG)

Joseph Gubanyi (JG)

Matt Hansen (MHa)

Robin Harding (RH)

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Blake Helget (BHe)

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Jack Lefor (JLe)	Ruthie Stearns (RSt)
Dan Leger (DL)	Jim Sullivan (JSu)
Jonah Levy (JLv)	Linda Sullivan (LSu)
Robert Manning (RMa)	Jason Thiele (JTh)
Sam Manning (SMa)	Paul Timm (PT)
Connie McCartney (CMc)	Jerry Toll (JT)
Sharla Meester (SMe)	Rob Towler (RTo)
Steve Mlodinow (SMl)	Matthew & Cynthia Van Den Broeke (M&CV)
Steve Morris (SM)	Bruce & Donna Walgren (B&DW)
Pavan Nagaraj (PNa)	T. J. Walker (TJW)
Jonathan Nikkila (JN)	Kylee Warren (KWa)
Quinn Pack (QP)	Gordon Warrick (GWa)
Loren & Babs Padelford (L&BP)	Don & Marion Weidemann (D&MW)
Don & Jan Paseka (D&JP)	Doug Weidemann (DWd)
Gregory Pavelka (GPa)	Jonathan Wentz (JWe)
Brian Peterson (BP)	Bruce White (BWh)
Luke Pheneger (LPh)	Rita Wiley (RWi)
Cathy Prettyman (CPr)	Nathan Wilhite (NWi)
Lanny Randolph (LR)	Bob Willison (BWi)
Ben Ream (BRe)	Michael Willison (MW)
Justin Rink (JR)	Elizabeth Winter (EW)
Paul Roisen (PR)	Chris Wood (CWo)
Jason St. Sauver (JSS)	Emily Wynn (EWy)
Theresa Sampson (TSa)	
Cheryl Samusevich (CSa)	

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Snow Goose: In recent years midwinter (10-25 Jan) numbers have been larger; an amazing 21,000 were counted carefully in *Nuckolls* 18 Jan (DE). Less than annual in midwinter in the Panhandle, one was in *Scotts Bluff* 15 Jan (KD).

Ross's Goose: Along with the large flock of Snow Geese in *Nuckolls* (above), 400 Ross's Geese were estimated (DE), by far the largest midwinter (10-25 Jan) count of the species to date.

Greater White-fronted Goose: Winter reports are becoming more numerous with this species also. Fewest records are in midwinter (15 Jan-1 Feb), but bracketing the midwinter "gap" were 32-38 at Flanagan Lake, *Douglas* 11-14 Jan (EBe), 24 at McCook, *Red Willow* 14 Jan (GK), 20 at PL 1 Feb (KS), 75 in East Lincoln, *Lancaster* 2 Feb (JSS), and 50 at MWCW 2 Feb (EJ). Rare in the Panhandle in midwinter, singles were at different *Scotts Bluff* locations 18 and 21 Jan (KD).

Cackling Goose: Routine reports.

Canada Goose: Routine reports.

Mute Swan: An unmarked adult in northwest Kearney, *Buffalo* 23 Feb (JN) raised questions about provenance; at that central Nebraska location it seems likely to have been derived from the managed population at nearby Yanney Lake, where, however, adults and juveniles are wing-clipped and all birds are accounted for. Surplus birds from Yanney are sold at auction, which might open a possibility for strays and escapes, however.

Trumpeter Swan: Two of the three highest counts on record were made this winter, continuing a trend of increasing wintering numbers; 144 were on the DeSoto NWR CBC, *Washington* 15 Dec (fide JT) and 133 were at Long Lake, *Lincoln* 1 Jan (SMA). A potential new wintering location is the 78th Ave area in Columbus, *Platte*, where numbers peaked at 100 on 31 Dec (LK).

Tundra Swan: Along with increasing numbers of wintering Trumpeter Swans, a few Tundras are lingering with them. This winter two were in *Platte* 31 Dec (LK photo), two were at Long Lake, *Lincoln* 15 Dec (BE), and three were nearby 22 Dec (TJW, JGJ, JN). One was at LO 17 Jan (JN photo) and three were near North Platte, *Lincoln* 22 Dec (TJW, JGJ, JN). Usually a rare migrant, and thus not unexpected were one in *Dakota* 2-6 Dec (BFH) and three in *Burt* 29 Feb (PT photo).

Wood Duck: Rare in midwinter (4 Jan-14 Feb), there were two reports: two were at PL 9 Jan (TG) and one was at Carter Lake, *Douglas* 3 Feb (JGr photo).

Blue-winged Teal: Quite late were the five at Sutherland Reservoir, *Lincoln* 8 Dec (BWh).

Cinnamon Teal: Earliest on record by two days was one in *Keith* 22 Feb (SMI).

Northern Shoveler: Wintering is rare but annual in the south and east, but this midwinter (9 Jan-13 Feb) there were a surprising nine reports, including 50 at Meadowlark Lake, Grand Island, *Hall* 13 Jan (CCh), and 38 at Holmes Lake, *Lancaster* 13 Jan (LE).

Gadwall: Wintering of small numbers is expected in the south and southeast, but unexpected for midwinter (14 Jan- 5 Feb) were seven near Taylor, *Loup* 25 Jan (JLe) and 14 at Lake Yankton, *Cedar* 2 Feb (EBr, DH).

American Wigeon: There were four midwinter (12 Jan-3 Feb) records. Two were in expected Platte and North Platte River valley locations, but out of range were singles on Lake Yankton and Lewis and Clark Lake, both in *Cedar*, 2 Feb (EBr, DH).

Mallard: Tying for 4th-highest winter count on record were the 34,000 at Sutherland Reservoir, *Lincoln* 4 Jan (SMI, DE). Two banded Mallards were recovered in *Burt* 5 Dec, one banded in South Dakota 14 years ago, the other in Kentucky, also 14 years ago, the oldest birds encountered in 25 years of waterfowling (EBe).

American Black Duck: There were two reports of this now less-than-annual winter visitor: two were in *Dodge* 15 Dec, one taken and photographed (BHe fide EBe), and one was in southwest *Sarpy* 2 Jan (JGJ, TJW, RSt; photos).

Northern Pintail: Routine reports.

Green-winged Teal: Routine reports.

Canvasback: Less than annual in midwinter (12-30 Jan), two overwintered at Skyview Lake, *Madison* (JTh, m. ob.).

Redhead: Rare in midwinter (13-28 Jan) away from the Platte and North Platte River valleys, there were two reports: eight were in *Cedar* 21 Jan (GPa) and two at BOL 28 Jan (LE).

Ring-necked Duck: Rare in midwinter (15-30 Jan) away from the Platte and North Platte River valleys, up to four overwintered at Ta-Ha-Zouka Park, *Madison* (JTh, m. ob.).

Greater Scaup: Routine reports.

Lesser Scaup: Less than annual in midwinter (16 Jan-2 Feb) away from the Platte and North Platte River valleys, there were three reports: 10 were in southwest *Sarpy* 25 Jan (DCu), and singles were at BOL 28 Jan (LE) and in *Cedar* 2 Feb (EBr, DH).

Surf Scoter: The only report was of a tardy fem./imm. in southwest *Sarpy* 2 Jan (JGJ photo) that tied the latest fall date on record.

White-winged Scoter: Second-earliest spring date on record and only the 29th for spring was one on a pond in Grand Island, *Hall* 15-27 Feb (RF photo, m. ob.).

Black Scoter: None were reported of this annual but rare fall migrant with expected last dates 16-20 Dec.

Long-tailed Duck: Probably an early migrant was a male on Lewis and Clark Lake, *Cedar* 15-29 Feb (PR, m. ob.).

Bufflehead: Midwinter (7-28 Jan) reports away from LM are rare; two were at Sutherland Reservoir, *Lincoln* 14 Jan (JLe).

Common Goldeneye: The 1500 at GPD 10 Feb (WF) was a good tally.

Barrow's Goldeneye: Three of the four reports were in the western Platte and North Platte River valleys, where the species is annual: one was in *Dawson*, north of Eustis 1 Dec-23 Feb (JGJ, m. ob.), two were at North Platte SL, *Lincoln* 22 Dec-5 Jan (LR, RH, TJW), and one was in an NPPD canal in North Platte 21-22 Feb (DL, TEL, BE, SM). The fourth report was in the east, where less than annual: two at GPD 4-25 Feb (JJ, RD, EBr, LBr, BFH).

Hooded Merganser: Rare in midwinter (6 Jan-17 Feb), but annual statewide except for the north, there were eight reports, all but one from Platte and North Platte River valleys and *Lancaster* locations. The exception was two at Calamus Reservoir, *Loup* 10 Feb (KS).

Common Merganser: Routine reports.

Red-breasted Merganser: Midwinter (24 Dec-2 Feb) reports away from LM are less than annual; this winter one was in *Dawson* 5 Jan (PR) and another was at BOL 28 Jan (LE).

Ruddy Duck: Less than annual in midwinter (7 Jan-16 Feb), there were two reports: 3-5 were at Carter Lake, *Douglas* 27 Jan-4 Feb (JGr, PNa) and one was at Lakeside Park, *Douglas* 8-10 Feb (MJo, EW).

Northern Bobwhite: Somewhat west of the expected range were three at Brownlee, *Cherry* 25 Jan (WF). Numbers appear to be increasing in *Dixon* (BFH).

Wild Turkey: The 431 on the DeSoto NWR CBC (fide JT) was a good count, albeit about on par for that area.

Sharp-tailed Grouse: Routine reports.

Greater Prairie-Chicken: Routine reports.

Gray Partridge: None were reported of this uncommon to rare resident in the northeast; numbers have been low in the last few years.

Ring-necked Pheasant: Routine reports.

Pied-billed Grebe: Less than annual in midwinter (9 Jan-21 Feb) even in the Platte and North Platte River valleys, one was in *Dawson* 12 Jan (EW). Quite unexpected were singles in *Dakota* 14 Jan (BFH, RTo, EBr, LBr) and at Barnett Park, *Red Willow* 9-14 Jan (GK). These are more likely lingering fall migrants.

Horned Grebe: One at LO 29 Feb (MW) was 3rd-earliest on record.

Red-necked Grebe: None were reported of this rare annual fall migrant with last expected dates 2-4 Jan.

Eared Grebe: Routine reports.

Western Grebe: None were reported of this common to uncommon fall migrant and less-than-annual winterer at LM with expected last dates in early Dec.

Rock Pigeon: Routine reports.

Eurasian Collared-Dove: Routine reports.

White-winged Dove: There were numerous reports during the period (m. ob.), continuing a significant increase in such records since winter 2013-2014; through this winter there are now about 50 records 2 Nov-23 Mar, somewhat surprisingly evenly distributed by month. This even distribution suggests a wintering population is developing, composed of birds summering in Nebraska.

Mourning Dove: Generally rare in winter (Dec-Feb) in the North Platte River Valley, there were a surprising seven reports of 1-2 birds 12 Dec-23 Feb (m. ob.).

Virginia Rail: Routine reports.

American Coot: A bit north of expected winter range for the number were 22 in the GPD area, *Cedar* 2 Feb (EBr, DH). One in *Dodge* 19 Feb (CCr photo) was likely an early migrant.

Sandhill Crane: Platte River Crane Trust aerial counts in the Central Platte River Valley tracked the spring buildup: 11 Feb, 6150 cranes, 18 Feb, 13,120, and 24 Feb, 34,500 (ACa). Comparable was the estimate of 10,000 in *Hall* on 16 Feb (KWa). Two at Rock Creek SRA, *Dundy* 29 Feb (SML, QP) were at an unusual spring location.

Killdeer: Routine reports.

American Woodcock: None were reported of this uncommon eastern spring migrant with early expected dates in the last week of Feb.

Wilson's Snipe: Rare but annual in midwinter, the six reports during the period were from expected locations in *Lincoln* and *Harlan* (m. ob.).

Greater Yellowlegs: None were reported of this common statewide fall migrant with expected last dates in the first week of Dec.

Black-legged Kittiwake: None were reported of this annual statewide fall migrant with last expected dates 6-9 Dec.

Bonaparte's Gull: Quite late was possibly the same bird reported at two locations at LO 4-5 Jan (SML, DE, WBe, SMe, BE).

Laughing Gull: Only the 3rd report for winter (Nov-Mar) was a first-winter-plumaged bird in *Dawson* 3 Jan (JN photo).

Franklin's Gull: The only report was of a tardy alternate-plumaged adult at Oak Park Lake, *Lancaster* 4 Dec (LSu).

Ring-billed Gull: The 4000 at LO 29 Feb (MW) was a good count for the date, about two weeks before expected peak migration.

California Gull: The only reports were of 1-2 adults at LM during the period (m. ob.), an expected location.

Herring Gull: Routine reports.

Iceland Gull: Good numbers were reported at LM during the period, peaking at eight on 21 Feb (JGJ). Most were the expected Iceland (Thayer's) Gulls, but there was one pale bird reported and well-described as "Iceland (*glaucoides/kumlieni*) Gull" 22 Feb (SML), likely the same bird reported there on the same day as "borderline Kumlien's" (JGJ). A reported pale gull at BOL 25 Feb (LE) may have been an Iceland or small Glaucous.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Midwinter (5 Jan-2 Feb) sightings are rare and expected only at LM; this winter 1-2 were there (m. ob.). Spring migrants arrived in late Feb, peaking at eight at LM on 22 Feb (SMa), a new spring record high count. The only report away from LM was of one rather late at PL 3 Jan (LE).

Glaucous Gull: The late 1990s saw high numbers of this species in Nebraska, but numbers have declined in recent years, as pointed out by one observer: "maybe becoming a bit more scarce this far south" (JGJ). Only three were reported, one at LM 8 Jan-21 Feb (SB, m. ob.) and two at Calamus Reservoir, Loup 24 Feb (KS photo).

Common Loon: A surprise was the two rather late at HCR 14 Dec (JGJ).

Yellow-billed Loon: Nebraska's 4th was nicely photographed at BOL 8 Dec (SKr).



This Yellow-billed Loon, Nebraska's 4th, was photographed by Steve Kruse at Branched Oak Lake, Lancaster 8 Dec 2019.

Double-crested Cormorant: The only overwintering birds were up to six at Sutherland Reservoir, *Lincoln* where expected; best counts were six on 1 Jan (BE) and five on 12 Jan (WBe). Less than annual away from Sutherland Reservoir in midwinter (25 Dec-26 Feb), there were two reports: one was tardy in *Saunders* 2 Jan (JGJ) and an imm. in Grand Island, *Hall* 15 Feb through the period (RF, JN, LK, m. ob.) was likely an early migrant.

American White Pelican: Arrival was early at HCR, where 30 were present 10 Feb (DEd) and as many as 150 by 14 Feb (JWe) and at Calamus Reservoir, *Loup*, where 30 were present 10 Feb and 50 on 18 Feb (KS).

Great Blue Heron: Routine reports.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: Nebraska's 5th-latest on record was an imm. along the Missouri River in *Otoe* 12 Dec (SMa, BRe).

Turkey Vulture: The only report was of one over Wayne, *Wayne* taking advantage of the leap year to establish a rare Feb record 29 Feb (EBr).

Osprey: One in *Jefferson* 20 Feb (MHa) was rather early; earliest expected dates are 17-19 Mar, and, as with Turkey Vulture, have been getting earlier in recent years.

Golden Eagle: Routine reports.

Northern Harrier: Routine reports.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: The seven on the BOL-Seward CBC, *Lancaster* 14 Dec (fide JG) was a good tally.

Cooper's Hawk: Routine reports.

Northern Goshawk: The four reports, all of photographed birds, were more than usual, as was noted for Fall also; single ads. were on the Harlan County Reservoir CBC 14 Dec (BP, LR, RH) and at LM 21 Feb (SMa), and single imms. were in *Scotts Bluff* 22 Dec (CWo, JBa, SMI) and near Brownlee, *Cherry* 2 Feb (JED, GWa).

Bald Eagle: The 500 at Calamus Reservoir, *Loup* 21 Feb (KS) was a record-high winter count. Another good tally was the 259 counted along 55 miles of the Missouri River in *Nemaha* and *Richardson* 23 Dec (SMa).

Red-shouldered Hawk: There were two reports of this species, which has likely become an annual winter visitor or resident in recent years. Apparently the same immature was at Stagecoach Lake SRA, *Lancaster* 8 Dec (JGJ), 25 Dec (SKr photo), and 26 Jan (KHG photo), and apparently the same adult was at PL and in nearby *Seward* on 31 Jan (TG).

Red-tailed (Eastern Red-tailed) Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis borealis*): Routine reports.

Red-tailed (Eastern Red-tailed) Hawk (*B. j. borealis*, morph "Krider's"): Current information suggests this color morph of *B. j. borealis* is less than annual in winter in se. Nebraska; the only reports were of singles in *Dodge* 8 Dec (D&JP) and *Otoe* 29 Feb (CEn).

Red-tailed (Northern Red-tailed) Hawk (*B. j. abieticola*): There were three reports of this subspecies, all with photos (SMa): singles were in *Sarpy* 1 Feb, *Douglas* 15 Feb, and near Lewellen, *Garden* 21 Feb. These are the 7th-10th Nebraska records of this newly recognized subspecies.

Red-tailed (Western Red-tailed) Hawk (*B. j. calurus*/*B. j. alascensis*): Routine reports.

Red-tailed (Harlan's) Hawk: Routine reports.

Rough-legged Hawk: Routine reports.

Ferruginous Hawk: Routine reports.

Eastern Screech-Owl: Routine reports.

Great Horned Owl: Copulation was observed 20 Jan in *Douglas* and again at the same location two days later (BHo).

Snowy Owl: None were reported of this rare but annual cyclic winter visitor.

Barred Owl: Numbers in the Orleans, *Harlan* area appear to be increasing; four were located at three locations 14 Dec (JGJ, JN). Westerly were singles in *Nuckolls* 18 Jan (DE) and *Madison* 21 Dec (fide DH).

Long-eared Owl: Routine reports.

Short-eared Owl: Routine reports.

Northern Saw-whet Owl: This was a good winter for this species, with reports from seven locations statewide involving about 20 individuals, most from the cedar canyons of southeastern *Lincoln*, where 13 were heard 20 Feb in Box Elder Canyon: "All calling along the road with 1-3 birds at each of our stops in areas of dense cedars. Eleven out of the thirteen were singing spontaneously with the other two responding to playback, and twelve out of the thirteen were along a 2.5 mile stretch of the road." (SMa). Late Jan calling for the third consecutive winter was heard in southeastern *Lincoln* in the same general area as above on 30 Jan; spring calls were not heard again until 17 Feb (LDe), the more expected date for presumed pre-spring departure calling.

Belted Kingfisher: Outside the expected winter range were singles near Elsmere, *Cherry* 25 Jan (WF) and in *Dawes* 21 Dec, the latter a first for the Crawford CBC (fide B&DW).

Lewis's Woodpecker: An amazing record was one at Schramm SP, *Sarpy*, Nebraska's first winter record and unbelievably far east, discovered by Lauren Darnold and Amber Schiltz 18 Dec and seen by around 115 people through 19 Jan.

Red-headed Woodpecker: This winter there were a few reports in midwinter north and west of the expected winter range: three were at Basswood WMA, *Dakota* 1 Feb (BFH), and there were reports from four different locations in *Lancaster*, three of singles 20 Jan-15 Feb (EW, JSu, JHo) and one of two (JBe).

Red-bellied Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Far westerly was one in a yard south of Gering, *Scotts Bluff* through 11 Jan. It had been present since 1 Nov (AK, KD), and was only the 5th record for Dec-Feb in the Panhandle. Another was northerly in *Antelope* 2 Feb (SB).

Downy Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Hairy Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Northern Flicker: Routine reports.

Pileated Woodpecker: One at Camp Cedars, *Saunders* on the Ames CBC 17 Dec (WF) was a good find there, where the species appears to be establishing slowly.

American Kestrel: Routine reports.

Merlin: Routine reports.



This Lewis's Woodpecker, Nebraska's first for winter and surprisingly far east in *Sarpy*, engendered around 115 eBird reports beginning with its discovery 18 Dec 2019 by Lauren Darnold and Amber Schiltz, and continuing through 19 Jan, here photographed 20 Dec by Steve Kruse.

Peregrine Falcon: Two at the Capitol Building nest site in Lincoln, *Lancaster* by 2 Feb (SKr photo) were the same pair returning for their 16th year (JHi), but unfortunately they have been unsuccessful for the last three, possibly due to their age (fide JGJ). At least one bird was at the Omaha, *Douglas* Woodmen Tower nest site from 31 Jan (SMa, m. ob.). Interesting information on the OPPD site in North Omaha, *Douglas* was provided by Jerry Toll: leading into the 2020 season, a new pair showed up 30 Jan, female Sierra banded 26 May 2016 at the Kansas City Power and Light Iatan generating station smokestack and an unidentified banded male. However, on 21 Feb another female took over the nest box, identified as Clark, previously thought to be the male present from 2015, due to a glitch in 2012 banding data, but behavioral observations have shown she is indeed a female. Thus, Clark is the female that was present in 2015, and this year resisted the effort by Sierra to take over the box. It is not known if Clark was the female present 2016-2018, although she was not the successful female present in 2019 based on bands. On 24 Feb 2020, the male was identified as Cheveyo, also a Kansas City bird, but on 2 Mar Cheveyo was ousted by another male whose bands show he is

the 2012 nest mate of Clark appropriately named Lewis. Lewis and Clark have settled down, copulated, and as of 21 Mar appear ready to settle in.

Prairie Falcon: Rare in the east in winter, there were reports of two in *Dodge* on the Ames CBC 17 Dec (fide J&JP), one in *Seward* 4 Feb (JG), and one in *Gage* 6 Feb (CWj).

Loggerhead Shrike: The only report was of a tardy bird on the HCR CBC 14 Dec (fide JGJ).

Pinyon Jay: None were reported of this uncommon but erratic western winter visitor.

Blue Jay: Routine reports.

Black-billed Magpie: This species maintains its tenuous hold in Nebraska, although reports from *Scotts Bluff* were encouraging: nine were at Stateline Island WMA 22 Dec (CWo, SMI, JBa) and eight were at a location east of Scottsbluff 18 Dec (KD). Counts of fewer than five came from other Panhandle locations and the LM area, where magpies are known to occur (m. ob.). The CBC report from Crawford, *Dawes* 21 Dec noted only two, where 35 were counted in 2005 (fide B&DW), and similar bad news came from the North Platte CBC, *Lincoln* 22 Dec where none were found for the third year in a row (fide TJW). The small eastern population in *Madison* persists; encouraging there was the Norfolk CBC tally 21 Dec of five from two locations (fide DH, WF). Scattered reports of 1-2 birds from southeastern *Lincoln*, *Hayes*, *Frontier* and *Furnas* 19 Jan-29 Feb (TSh, DBr, SMI, NWi), where resident populations are currently not known, may have been of winter wanderers.

American Crow: Routine reports.

Horned Lark: The 5232 on the Grand Island CBC 14 Dec (fide CMc) was record high for that count. Record high for a Nebraska CBC is the 6533 at Lake McConaughy in 1996.

Black-capped Chickadee: Numbers have not recovered on the BOL-Seward CBC; in the first 10 years of the count >100 chickadees were counted per year, but no count since 2002 has reached that level (fide JG).

Mountain Chickadee: None were reported of this rare but annual western winter visitor.

Tufted Titmouse: One in *Nuckolls* 2 Jan (EWy) was west of the expected range and only the 2nd record from that county. Reports suggestive of a decline continue; none were seen Dec-Jan in a Bellevue, *Sarpy* yard with active feeders (L&BP). Two were on the Lincoln CBC, *Lancaster*, where rare, 5 Jan (fide JSS).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: The high numbers reported in the west in fall continued into winter, with 29 in Carter Canyon, *Scotts Bluff* 22 Dec (SMI, JBa, CWo) and 27 on the North Platte, *Lincoln* CBC the same day, record high for that count (fide TJW). Best count in the east was the 11 at a *Cass* location 18 Dec (TJW), but an active Bellevue, *Sarpy* yard reported only one bird for Jan (L&BP).

White-breasted Nuthatch: One at Alliance, *Box Butte* 10 Feb (BE) was a winter visitor there, since breeding is unknown at that location.

Pygmy Nuthatch: Routine reports.

Brown Creeper: Routine reports.

House Wren: Only the third on record for Dec was one at LSWNP 2 Dec (LSu photo).

Winter Wren: The several midwinter reports in the southeast were expected, but out of range for Jan were 1-2 at Sutherland Reservoir, *Lincoln* 1-5 Jan (BE photo, SMI, DE recording). The recording confirmed the identification as Winter rather than Pacific Wrens.

Marsh Wren: Wintering is rare away from the North Platte River Valley, but this winter there were several reports indicating widespread wintering in the southwest. One was at Barnett Park, *Red Willow* 9 Jan (GK photo), one at Swanson Reservoir, *Hitchcock* 29 Feb (SMI), one at Enders Reservoir SRA, *Chase* 29 Feb (SMI), three at Rock Creek SRA, *Dundy* 29 Feb (SMI), and, eastward in the south, singles at two locations in *Harlan* 12-14 Dec (JGJ, JN).

Carolina Wren: There were a surprising two westerly in *Lincoln*; one was at a feeder in a cedar canyon since 14 Nov and seen again 14 Dec (LDe) and one was near Brady 15 Feb (BE).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Tardy in the north and west were one in *Holt* 4 Jan (JTh) and three in Gordon, *Sheridan* the same day (SB).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: North of the expected winter range was one in *Dakota* 26 Dec-1 Jan (BFH).

Eastern Bluebird: Five in *Brown* 21 Feb (JCo) were early there.

Mountain Bluebird: One in *Dundy* 29 Feb (SMI, QP) was a migrant; wintering there is unknown. Best count in the cedar canyon winter range was a moderate 64 along Miriam Road, *Lincoln* 9 Jan (BE).

Townsend's Solitaire: Easternmost were singles two *Lancaster* locations: one continuing since 13 Nov (JGJ) at BOL through 7 Feb (m. ob.), and one at PP 5 Jan-1 Feb (RSt, m. ob.).

Hermit Thrush: One in *Harlan* 14 Dec (JGJ) was not unexpected there on that date, nor was one at Hastings, *Adams* 2 Dec (PD), but one at Ash Hollow SHP, *Garden* 1 Jan (SMA photo) was quite late there.

American Robin: Routine reports.

Varied Thrush: The only report of this less than annual winter visitor was of one in Lincoln, *Lancaster* 24-29 Dec (CSa photo).

Gray Catbird: The first documented state record of overwintering was of one in a Lincoln, *Lancaster* yard 2 Dec through 22 Jan (M&CV, photo).

Brown Thrasher: There were 3-4 individuals reported in midwinter (Jan-Feb), one of which was documented wintering in a yard or yards near Lake Cunningham, *Douglas* 28 Dec-29 Jan (SBr, RWi, photo). Another that may not have made it through Jan was in a Lincoln, *Lancaster* yard for several weeks through 15 Jan (SDo). Elsewhere, singles that may have been wintering were in an Omaha, *Douglas* yard 25 Jan- 1 Feb (RMa, SMA, photo) and in a Lincoln, *Lancaster* yard 21 Feb (JSu).

Northern Mockingbird: Only the 11th state record for Feb was one in *Dundy* 29 Feb (SMI, QP).

European Starling: Routine reports.

Bohemian Waxwing: Up to four were reported at three locations around LM during the period with flocks of Cedar Waxwings (SMI, m. ob.), although, intriguingly, one emerged from a robin flock in response to a recording at Cedar Vue Campground 21 Feb (SMA).

Cedar Waxwing: Routine reports.

House Sparrow: The 210 in Kimball, *Kimball* 18 Dec (SML) was a good non-CBC count.

American Pipit: Strangely, a single bird appeared at PL 11 Feb (JG), seen by many through at least 26 Feb (m. ob.); this is about three weeks earlier than expected and is the only record for Feb for the state.

Evening Grosbeak: Reports were from two locations: two were at Ponderosa WMA, *Dawes* 21 Dec for the Crawford CBC (KD), and possibly the same birds were there 5 Jan (SB). In addition, four were at WHNC 22 Dec (SML, JBa, CWo).

Pine Grosbeak: The only report was of two males and a female on the HCR CBC 14 Dec (BP photo) and re-found the following day (LR, RH, JN).



This Pine Grosbeak was one of a group of three found and photographed on the Harlan County CBC 14 Dec by Brian Peterson.

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch: Unexpected were good numbers of the “Hepburn’s” subspecies (*Leucosticte tephrocotis littoralis*) mixed with the usually more numerous subspecies *L. t. tephrocotis* at the well-known Henry Road, *Sioux*

location; 25 of 55 total rosy-finches there 22 Dec were Hepburn's (SML, CWo, JBa). Reports of the species away from *Sioux* and *Scotts Bluff* are rare; the 30 on Wright's Gap Road, *Banner* 31 Dec (SMA, photos) was only the 9th such record.

House Finch: Routine reports.

Purple Finch: Routine reports.

Cassin's Finch: Perhaps the only reliable location in the state for this rare, erratic, but annual winter visitor is WHNC, where there were three reports of 1-2 birds 30 Dec-17 Jan (SMA, KD, ACr).

Common Redpoll: This was definitely a low year, with none in fall and only two winter reports and three birds: one in *Douglas* 31 Dec (PT) and two in *Dixon* 15 Feb (TSa).

Red Crossbill: There were more reports from the east than in most winters, following on from the large numbers in fall; there were 26 reports involving around 140 birds in all. Most recordings indicated the expected Type 2, but Type 4 birds were detected at Plattsmouth Cemetery, *Cass* 27 Dec (BP) and 11 Feb (SMA). Type 4 had been reported in fall also.

White-winged Crossbill: Following the single report in fall, there were reports from two more locations: a female was at a Bellevue, *Sarpy* feeder 23-25 Dec (L&BP), and 5-7 were at the Gordon Cemetery, *Sheridan* 27 Dec-4 Jan (M&DW, DWd, SB).

Pine Siskin: Numbers were high statewide, as in fall; about 840 individuals were reported, and the best count was the 170 at WHNC 22 Dec (SML, JBa, CWo). Some 980 were reported in fall.

Lesser Goldfinch: The first winter (Nov-Mar) record was in 2002, but four of the six records are since 2016, including this winter's green-backed male at LM 14 Dec (SML, MHo, DE).

American Goldfinch: An example of distributional variability in winter numbers was provided in southeast *Lincoln* where a feeder operation usually fills several feeders multiple times each day for "thousands" of goldfinches, but as of 14 Dec only 50-100 were present (fide LDe).

Lapland Longspur: Routine reports.

Snow Bunting: Reports were widespread but best count was only six, in *Lancaster* 14 Feb (JBe).

Chipping Sparrow: Only the 7th overall record for Jan was one at Cedar Vue Campground, LM 5 Jan (BE photo).

Field Sparrow: About eight were reported in Dec in the south and southeast as expected, but midwinter (10 Jan-15 Feb) reports are less than annual; a surprising three were at Rowe Sanctuary, *Buffalo* 23 Jan (JN).

Fox Sparrow: At the west edge of the winter range in the Platte and Republican river valleys were singles at HCR 14 Dec (JGJ) and Cottonmill Park, *Buffalo* 23 Dec and 11 Jan (JN). The latter bird was in the same place as individuals seen the two previous winters (JN).

American Tree Sparrow: A good CBC count was the 1056 at Grand Island, *Hall* 14 Dec (fide CMc).

Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco: The 450 at Norfolk, *Madison* 21 Dec (PT) was a good non-CBC tally.

Dark-eyed (Cassiar) Junco: Routine reports.

Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco: The eight on the DeSoto CBC 15 Dec (fide JT) was a good eastern count.

Dark-eyed (Pink-sided) Junco: The only report from the east, where less than annual and often difficult to conclusively identify, was one in *Dixon* 18 Dec (PR).

Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco: Best count was the eight in Carter Canyon, *Scotts Bluff* 22 Dec (SMI, JBa, CWo).

White-crowned Sparrow: Routine reports.

Harris's Sparrow: One in *Scotts Bluff* 22 Dec (SMI, JBa, CWo) was a rarity there in late Dec. A good CBC tally was the 195 at Indian Cave SP, *Nemaha/Richardson* 14 Dec (KHo); recent years have seen a steep decline in wintering numbers.

White-throated Sparrow: At the west edge of the expected winter range in the Platte River Valley was one at North Platte, *Lincoln* 16 Feb (JLv).

Vesper Sparrow: Only the 5th midwinter (5 Dec-21 Feb) report was of one seen on the DeSoto NWR CBC 15 Dec and photographed the next day (CPr).

Song Sparrow: Somewhat northwest of the expected winter range were singles in *Antelope* 5 Jan (JTh) and at Olson Nature Preserve, *Boone* 1 Jan (DH, JTh, WF). The 43 at HCR dam 12 Dec (JGJ) was a good count.

Lincoln's Sparrow: Westerly for the date was one in *Scotts Bluff* 22 Dec (SMI, JBa, CWo).

Swamp Sparrow: One near Paxton, *Keith* 4 Jan (SMI, DE) was westerly for the date. Two in *Lancaster* 22 Feb (BHo) may have been wintering.

Spotted Towhee: Usually by late Dec few occur away from the southeastern corner of the state, but this year such reports were numerous and included good numbers. Six were as far west as *Harlan* 14 Dec (JGJ), four were northerly on the Ames CBC, *Dodge* 17 Dec (fide D&JP), and the eight on the BOL-Seward CBC, *Lancaster* 14 Dec (fide JG) was a new high count for that circle. Westerly for the date was one in *Scotts Bluff* 22 Dec (SMI). Midwinter (Jan-Mar) reports away from the southeast are rare; singles were in *Hall* 9-22 Jan (CCh), *Nance* 17 Jan (LK), *Buffalo* 20 Jan (JN), and *Dundy* 29 Feb (SMI).

Eastern Towhee: This species is less than annual in winter and occurs only in the extreme southeast when reported. As with Spotted Towhee, however, more than usual were present, including as many as seven on the Indian Cave SP CBC 14 Dec (KHo). Farther north than usual were one in *Dakota* 25 Jan (BFH) and two at PSP 15 Feb (BFH), as well as one on the Ames CBC, *Dodge* 17 Dec (fide D&JP). At least two were at FF; females, possibly the same bird, were reported 27 Dec (JR) and 4 Jan (JLa, CJo), and a male was there 22 Feb (JR).

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Two in *Sarpy* 2 Jan (JGJ) were tardy.

Western Meadowlark: A record high midwinter (15-30 Jan) tally was the 155 in *Nuckolls* 18 Jan; no Easterns were detected (DE).

Red-winged Blackbird: As with other "half-hardy" species this winter, more than usual lingered into Jan north and east of the expected winter range; 350 were at Jackson, *Dakota* 19 Jan (EBr, LBr) and 110 were in *Dakota*, including a mixed-sex flock, 14 Jan (BFH). Farther west, 51 were at O'Neill, *Holt* 4 Jan

(SB) and two were at Valentine NWR, *Cherry* 18 Jan (LPh, m. ob.). The 7500 at North Platte, *Lincoln* 22 Dec (TJW) was a good late Dec tally.

Brown-headed Cowbird: Tardy in the west were three on Henry Road and seven near Morrill, all on 5 Jan in *Scotts Bluff* (PR), and only the 4th and 5th Panhandle records for Nov-Feb. The flock of 100 on the Ames CBC, *Dodge* 17 Dec (BP) was a good number for the date, as was the 25 in *Pierce* 2 Feb (DH, EBr).

Rusty Blackbird: One near O'Neill, *Holt* 4 Jan (SB) was northwest of the expected winter range.

Brewer's Blackbird: Usually rare by Dec, there were four reports through 3 Jan, when 20 were near North Platte, *Lincoln* (BE). A flock of 40 was in *Dodge* 8 Dec (D&JP), 54 were north of North Platte 21 Dec (JGJ), and 38 were at Mitchell, *Scotts Bluff* 22 Dec (SML, JBa, CWo).

Common Grackle: One in Gordon, *Sheridan* 26 Jan (D&MW) was unexpected at that northwesterly location in Jan; it was hanging out with starlings.

Great-tailed Grackle: Sizeable numbers winter in the central Platte River Valley from Grand Island to North Platte, although high counts in late Feb suggest the arrival of spring migrants; 400 were near Doniphan, *Hall* 21 Feb (RSt), 200 were at the North Platte, *Lincoln* Flying J Truck Stop 23 Feb (BE), and 146 were in Lexington, *Dawson* 22 Feb (JGJ).

Orange-crowned Warbler: There were a surprising number of reports for Dec and even Jan. Only the 3rd all-time record for Jan-Feb was one at BOL 26 Jan (MW, BWi; photo). Almost as surprising, adding to the previous all-time total of seven reports for Dec, were no fewer than three more: 1-2 at Stolley Park, *Hall* 11-15 Dec (SM, CCh, RF), one at Republican City, *Harlan* 12 Dec (JGJ), and one at Schramm SP, *Sarpy* 21 Dec (RSt).

Common Yellowthroat: Like the preceding species, this "half-hardy" warbler can linger. The single report added to the two prior; one was at Holmes Lake, *Lancaster* 13 Dec in the same place as presumably the same bird was seen 24 Nov (KS).

Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler: Routine reports.

Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler: The 5th winter (Dec-Jan) record from the LM area, 7th overall, was one photographed 21 Feb (BP, RSt).

Northern Cardinal: One at Gordon, *Sheridan* 28 Feb (D&MW) was one of only about 20 Pine Ridge reports since the late 1980s. A record CBC tally at North Platte, *Lincoln* was the 31 on 22 Dec (fide TJW).